

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-3, 5, 7, 9-11, 13, 17, 19, and 21, 23, and 24 are pending in this application. Claims 1-3, 5, 7, 9-11, 13, 17, 19, and 21 stand rejected. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 2 have been amended and new claims 23 and 24 have been added. No new matter has been added. The amendments made to the claims have not been made to define over the prior art. Rather, the amendments to the claims have been made to improve the form thereof. In light of the amendments and remarks set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the pending claims is in immediate condition for allowance.

Claims 1-3, 5, 7, 9-11, 13, 17, 19, and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,066,089 ("Costello"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Among the limitations in independent claim 1 not present in the cited reference is a tip fixing portion which is arranged such that it projects on an outer peripheral surface of a cylindrical portion to fix a tip of the flexible tube thereto, the flexible tube holding member being detachably attached to the endoscope body, and the flexible tube being wound around the flexible tube holding member with the tip of the flexible tube inserted in the tip fixing portion to hold the flexible tube.

Costello does not disclose the structure of the claimed invention in which the tip portion of the flexible tube is fixed to the tip fixing portion and wound around the flexible tube holding member. As the tip portion of the flexible tube is fixed, it is possible to wind the flexible tube around the cylindrical portion without having the problem of the flexible tube floating up. If the tip portion is fixed, it is easy to wind the flexible tube. This advantage cannot be obtained by the apparatus disclosed by Costello.

Costello discloses a reel 180 having a holder 182 defined in the reel.

However, Applicants note that the holders 182 are merely slots in the reel 180. Costello fails to disclose a tip fixing portion which is arranged such that it projects on an outer peripheral surface of a cylindrical portion. Thus, Costello fails to anticipate independent claim 1.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 9-11, 13, 17, 19, 21, and 23-24 depend either directly or indirectly from, and contain all the limitations of claim 1. These dependent claims also recite additional limitations which, in combination with the limitations of claim 1, are neither disclosed nor suggested by Costello and are also believed to be directed towards the patentable subject matter. Thus, claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 9-11, 13, 17, 19, 21, and 23-24 should also be allowed.

Applicant has responded to all of the rejections and objections recited in the Office Action. Reconsideration and a Notice of Allowance for all of the pending claims are therefore respectfully requested.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue.

If the Examiner believes an interview would be of assistance, the Examiner is welcome to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

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Respectfully submitted,

By

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